

SISTER MARY HOLYWATER AND FRIENDS

by

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"Have you read today's lesson?"

"Yes I have sister!" I had glanced at it five minutes before the interview.

"All right then, hand me your book and recite for me the Our Father."

"Uh...Our Father...who art...in heaven...uh...hollow bee...uh...uh..."

"Thy name."

"Right! Thy name. Uh...uh..Thy kingdom come...Thy ...uh..uh...Thy..."

"Thy will be done!"

"Uh, right! Thy will be done...uh...uh..."

"On--"

"ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN!" As I wiped the cold sweat from my brow, I avoided sister's glance hoping that she would not be able to read from my eyes that I had not read this week's lesson.

"Young man, are you sure that you read this week's lesson?" But somehow she was on to my tricks.

"Yes sister!" I said cheerfully.

"All right then, recite for me the Hail Mary." My smile broke and the cold sweat began to reappear.

"Hail Mary..full of...grace...uh...hollow bee thy name. OPPS! AH, I MEAN, THE LORD IS WITH THEE!" (sigh).

"Yes? Continue."

"Oh, uh...Blessed art thou..among...women..and uh blessed

are the fruits of..uh..thy womb, Jesus."

"Okay, now what do these prayers mean?" I ^{could not} cannot believe it. Here I ^{was} am, just a second grader who ^{could} can barely recite these things and she ^{wanted} wants me to explain their theological significance. This woman ^{was} is really out to get me.

keep tense consistency

/then slip into dramatic point.

"You mean that you can't tell me what they mean?"

"Ah, no sister...I mean yes sister."

"Well then," she began to scribble something on my book, "when you get home show this to your mother." Darn those nuns. She wrote the note in handwriting. She ^{knew} knows that I cannot read handwriting.

When I got home I showed the note to my mom. She got a very disappointed look on her face and just shook her head. This class was supposed to prepare me for my first Holy Communion but ^{all it really did.} what it really was doing was causing a lot of heartache for my mom.

All the other years that I had been in C.C.D., all we had to do was listen to dumb stories about some guy with this boat full of animals that got swallowed by a whale and draw pictures of God. But now we had to learn prayers and ceremonies and with nuns! (Ha to all of you parochial school kids! I had only one year with nuns, and that being only once a week, and that almost ruined me), And what was worse was that we also had to go to our first Confession.

Why anyone would stick a scared seven year old in a dark box to talk to a stranger about things that he would not even share with his best friend is beyond me.

clashes

awkward

"Bless me Father for I have sinned. It has been....ah....oh yeah..this is my first confesion."

"Continue."

"Oh, these are my sins: I lied to my mom and my dad. I broke my little brother's bow and arrow and told my mom that my sister, Joyce, had done it."

"Anything else?"

"Nope." I did not tell him about me wetting my pants and then throwing my underwear away.

"Well then..." The man proceeded to rattle off some prayer so fast that to this day I have yet to decipher which language it is in. "Your penance is to say four Our Fathers and six Hail Marys." Not more Our Fathers and Hail Marys! ~~Oh well~~, I walked out of the dark box, knelt in the empty church, prayed to the invisible God, and then went home to tell my brother about the funny man in the box.

A week later I found myself ~~and~~ ^{with} a hundred other squirming second graders being herded into a processional line for our first Holy Communion. The head nun, Sister Mary (why are all nuns named Mary?) addressed us:

"Now boys and girls, your mothers and fathers are going to be very proud of you when they see you march up to the front of the church, so please stay in line and do not converse with one another. Remember that the little Lord Je--"

"Sister!" A boy ahead of me in line was waving his hand in the air and ~~frantically~~ ^{frantically} jumping up and down.

"Sister Teresa, will you please take little William to the bathroom?"

We all giggled and pointed at the puddle which William was standing in. *

"Now boys and girls, remember that the little Lord Jesus is in the church and he is waiting for you to receive him in the host. This reminds me of what Mother Teresa of Calcutta used to say to her congregation of nuns when they used to walk through the streets of that God-forsaken city. She used to say...." It suddenly occurred to me why the nuns wanted us to be here an hour and a half early. "...Okay now, Father is waiting for us in front of the church, so let's walk in. Remember two lines!"

~~So~~ We all began to file into the church. By this time most of the adults, including Father Patrick O'Donnell, were leaning on their elbows, the weight of boredom causing them to disfigure their faces, making them look like pudgy little pigs. We sat in the first rows of the church, boys on one side and girls on the other. And for most of the service my friend and I played "paper-sissors-stone". But when the time came to receive communion, having missed our cue to stand up, we were prompted by sister's loud cough.

Kneeling before the altar there was a certain sense of awe as this grey old man with the gold cup placed white pieces of paper on our out stretched tongues while chanting something like "Body-cry". Those of us that remembered the magic word ~~that~~ ^{ed} ~~gave us the power to~~ return to our seats (no not "please," that is the mistake that my friend made. He said please after receiving the host and could not get up until he remembered to say "Amen". He was still up there when we left the church), We

were instructed to kneel and pray with our faces in our hand, thanking God for our teachers and parents. Anyone ~~that~~^{who} dared to look God straight in the face while praying would be struck dead. Luckily God was not looking in my direction when I peeked at Him through my fingers.

When Mass finally ended we filed out amidst flashing cameras and crying mothers. At home there was cake and punch and a gift from my god-parents. I worried a little bit that Jesus might not enjoy the company of the cake and punch in my stomach. He was there first. But it did not seem to bother him.

A week later life was ~~back to~~ normal. We found our usual place at church, standing in the back because we were late. My brother and I went ~~back to~~^{played} our game ~~called~~^{the} "Leaning tower of Pisa." Each of us would stand with our legs together and lean in every direction like a top that was running out of speed. The object of the game was to see who could lean the farthest in any direction without falling down. My brother usually lost. *

This was the extent of my religious life. I was too busy dreaming about becoming an astronaut or some great football player to bother. And no one really seemed to care, that is until I reached the eighth grade.

In the eighth grade we were all poured into one large group where we had "rap" sessions. I still wonder what "rap" means. And to climax these weekly excursions into ~~the~~ ^{the} obscurity we were given an eighth grade retreat.

The retreat was supposed to prepare us for our Confirmation. They wanted us to become committed Catholic young men and women.

"What we would like for you to do is pair off into groups of two and..." Everybody got out of their seats and started walking around in search of a partner. I ended up with my best friend. "...And please make sure that the person that you're with isn't a close friend." My friend and I looked at each other while everybody else got up and changed partners.

Shaking his hand I said, with a poor English accent, "Why, it is a pleasure to meet you, master Edward. My name is..."

"Please introduce yourself to your partner and then we will give you five minutes to ask your partner these questions: What is your favorite color and why, what is your favorite season and why, what is your favorite food and why? After you have asked these three questions your partner will have five minutes to ask you these questions."

"What's your favorite color Ed? No, let me guess...pink!" We laughed as everybody else continued to struggle through these questions.

By the time they had answered the first question we had asked each other all three, so we proceeded to play "paper-sissors-stone." It was a poor decision because we were soon caught and then separated. Ed had to pair up with a teacher and I talked to a girl ^{who} ~~that~~ did not have a partner.

After watching a film and talking to each other about the masks people wear we listened to the discourse provided this afternoon by Mister James Carlin entitled: Commitment and Hypocrisy.

"Many of you consider yourselves adults. You think that

you're old enough to make your own decisions -- to exercise the freedom that everyone's talking about. You live in a generation that's very ^{quick} ~~fast~~ to point out the hypocrisy of my generation... How we say one thing and do another. Well, many of ^{your} ~~these~~ points are well taken, I mean, you're right about the hypocrisy and the phoniness of my generation, in many instances. But all I hear coming from you is just talk. Talk, that's it!

"You'll be the first to point out that we preach the righteousness of the Declaration of Independence: 'We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal...' But at the same time we allow the Blacks, the Mexicans, and the original Americans, the Indians to be discriminated against, almost persecuted. But again all I hear is talk.

"Okay...here is an opportunity for you to do something about this hypocrisy, the hypocrisy in the church as well as in the state. In two weeks we're going to be administering the sacrament of Confirmation. Now most of you ^{intend} ~~were intending on~~ ^{to} ~~showing~~ up because 'mommy and daddy' want you to, and that's good, you should want to please your folks. But if that is your only reason for attending, then you're going to miss alot of the significance that this sacrament can hold for you.

"God has sent his Holy Spirit into this world so that we as Catholics will be able to live a good life, just as the gospel says: 'By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, because you love one another.' And we, meaning you and ^{us} ~~me~~, if we are going to get rid of the hypocrisy in the world, then we're going to have to start by eliminating the phoniness and hypocrisy in our own lives. To do this we need the Holy Spirit."

Nice try Mr. Carlin. Unfortunately when I left the retreat I could not help but feel ^{as if} like all that I had received was words.

Two weeks passed. I found myself in church, in the same front rows, with basically the same people surrounding me. There was Father O'Donnell up at the pulpit giving the same long winded sermons. We, in the meantime, were trying to decide which girl was the "foxiest". Later we decided that the girl that slipped on her way down from the altar showed the most potential. The sign of the cross, a light tap on the cheek by the bishop, and back to my seat I went to pray with my face in my hands.

When Mass was over there was the same array of camera flashes and the same weeping mothers. And at home more cake and punch and a gift from my god-parents. Only this time I did not worry about whether Jesus or the Holy Spirit enjoyed the company of my cake or punch, because if they were there I did not know it.

Why give an entire page to Mr. Carlin's speech. That seems out of proportion unless you intend to continue this, and later, his "theme" will come into play.

otherwise, I find this well-written, nicely paced. You still need to be more attentive to little points of grammar.